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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 3892
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4438
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3648
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1904
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 4396
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1269
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1715
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 8263
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5744
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0649
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4773
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6722
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 9453
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000776

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted senior IDF Intelligence officers as saying at the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Sunday that Hizbullah is preparing for fresh violence

along the border. Leading media quoted Defense Minister Ehud Barak as saying on Tuesday during a tour of the Lebanese border: "Hizbullah is becoming stronger, and so are we. We are prepared for all eventualities. We watch the pastoral calm, and we know that other things are seething beneath the surface." Major media cited the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi as saying that Syria has been preparing for a large-scale Israeli attack on Syria and Hizbullah, and that Syria has called up reserves. Former Syrian communication minister Dr. Mahdi Dahlallah was quoted as saying in interview with the Arabic-language Kull al-Arab that holding the Arab summit in Syria despite America's opposition is considered a success. Maariv quoted foreign sources as saying that Iran has built state-of-the-art eavesdropping bases in Syria.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Defense Minister Barak appears "to be on a collision course with the IDF, which has voiced strong opposition to allowing the PA to regain control of the Gaza crossings.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a resolution urging that the issue of Jewish refugees be part of any agreement.

Leading media cited a religious edict issued by a group of hawkish rabbis this week, according to which Shas and other government coalition members who permitted the transfer of armored cars and firearms to the PA are aiding and abetting terrorism.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a World Health Organization (WHO) report that sharply criticized the IDF's screening of Palestinians in Israeli hospitals was flatly rejected by defense officials on Tuesday, who called it "completely wrong." On Monday Israel TV reported that police are set to question M Ehud Olmert in the coming days over the purchase of a luxury home in Jerusalem's Carmia development project (on Cremieux Street). However, police spokesman Mickey Rosenfeld was quoted as saying that no new significant developments had taken place in the investigation.

All media reported that on Tuesday Shas MK Shlomo Benizri was convicted in the Jerusalem District Court of accepting bribes, breach of faith, obstructing justice, and conspiracy to commit a crime. The state announced that it would ask the court to determine that the crimes for which he was found guilty involved moral turpitude.

The Jerusalem Post and other media cited the results of a BBC poll of attitudes across the globe toward various countries that was published on Wednesday. Negative views of Israel fell over the past year from 57% to 52%, while negative views of Iran's influence held steady at 54%, giving it the worst rating of the countries tested.

Yediot cited the results of a Dialog poll that found that 40% of Israelis would have voted for Senator Hillary Clinton, 22.6% for Senator John McCain, and 9.2% for Senator Barack Obama.

Mideast:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "If anything sabotages the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian accommodation, it's attacks on Israeli civilians, wherever they may be."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Captive] soldiers must be brought home, says [IDF Chief of Staff Gabi] Ashkenazi, speaking with gritted

teeth. Like all of us."

Moshe Keinan and Haim Deri, fathers of soldiers who fell in battle in 2003 and 2004, wrote on page one of Maariv: "Our sons served in an army that protects an entire country, not in an army that surrenders in order to protect its soldiers."

Block Quotes:

I. "Don't Politicize Checkpoints"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/2): "A short while after the Rimonim roadblock [between Jericho and Ramallah] was cleared a stabbing attempt took place near Shiloh, which is about 30 minutes from Jerusalem and a few minutes' drive from Rimonim.... If anything sabotages the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian accommodation, it's attacks on Israeli civilians, wherever they may be. Thus moves -- no matter how well-intentioned and theoretically desirable -- whose unintended consequences facilitate terrorism are likely to torpedo whatever peace prospects still conceivably remain. No Israeli discerns any benefit in deliberately imposing hardship on ordinary Palestinians. We know that most simply want to get to work or school, seek medical treatment, or visit with family. If Palestinians have anyone to blame for the undeniable inconvenience caused by roadblocks, it's the terrorist organizations, whose popularity seems to skyrocket -- among ordinary Palestinians -- the more Jewish lives they take. It's also significant that factions affiliated with Abbas's own Fatah movement have claimed responsibility for the Shiloh attack.... Israel has every interest in bolstering a Palestinian leadership committed to peaceful coexistence and capable of imposing effective security control on those of its own people who oppose this. Withdrawing Israeli security precautions in the absence of such effective control may be well-intentioned, but unfortunately is a recipe for bloodshed."

II. "The Dilemma in All Its Cruelty"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/2): "Why is Gilad Shalit's life more important than the life of the soldiers who were killed in capturing these terrorists? Why is Gilad more important than the lives of the soldiers who will yet be killed in order to apprehend them next time? Than the lives of the civilians who will be killed in future terror attacks that they are planning or will carry out? Moreover, this inconceivable notion, which exists only in Israel, that the life of a lone Israeli soldier is worth the lives of hundreds of murderers, is multiplying at the rate of a geometric progression. An industry of kidnapping, murder and death is developing on our doorstep. We created it.... None of the world leaders who visit us are capable of understanding how an entire country is paralyzed, petrified and disoriented due to one kidnapped soldier, or three -- ready to go bankrupt, to pay any price, to lose any asset, to give up any principle, in order to bring him home. On one hand, this is a national quality in which we can take pride. On the other hand, it is difficult to accept. The enemies, on the other side, exploit it to the fullest. A great deal of blood has been spilled because of it.... Soldiers must be brought home, says [IDF Chief of Staff Gabi] Ashkenazi, speaking with gritted teeth. Like all of us."

III. "Not at Any Price"

Moshe Keinan and Haim Deri, fathers of soldiers who fell in battle in 2003 and 2004, wrote on page one of Maariv (4/2): "To the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, Noam Shalit, and his friends! When we heard Noam Shalit saying his son is the only 'sucker' who paid the price, we said to ourselves that his son is not the only sucker in the country and is not the only one who is paying the price for its security.... Our sons served in an army that protects an entire country, not in an army that surrenders in order to protect its

soldiers.... Constant pressure should be applied to the political environment surrounding Hamas in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the European countries -- which advise us to negotiate with Hamas. Instead of an Egyptian general coming and telling us the price for the release of the kidnapped soldier, it would be better if he were

forced to come to us after we had put pressure on them. Then we would tell him the price for easing our pressure -- the return of the kidnapped soldier! Without preconditions, otherwise we would serve them with a higher price tag. That is how negotiations should be conducted in the Middle East!"

JONES